

Message Text

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SS-15 HA-05 ACDA-12 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9788

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 6605

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, WA, SF

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: CONTACT GROUP'S FINAL MEETING WITH SAG

REF: (A) PRETORIA 6595, (B) PRETORIA 6596

1. THE RESULTS OF THE CONTACT GROUP'S FINAL MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER BOTHA AND FOREIGN SECRETARY FOURIE WERE SENT REFTEL A. AFTER TWO EARLIER INFORMAL MEETINGS, IT HAD BEEN AGREED THAT WE WOULD HAVE A FORMAL SESSION DEC 3. ALTHOUGH THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUBSEQUENT MEETING WITH VORSTER WAS HELD OPEN, IN THE EVENT WE DID NOT SEE HIM.

2. AFTER WE HAD PRESENTED OUR VIEWS ON THE WITHDRAWAL
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OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS FROM NAMIBIA (REFTEL B), BOTHA SAID IT WAS A PITY THAT THE QUESTION OF THE PRESENCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS "CAME TO BE A MATTER OF SUBSTANCE". THE SAG HAD, HE CLAIMED, UNDERSTOOD FROM THE BEGINNING OF OUR TALKS THAT TROOP WITHDRAWAL WAS NOT AT ISSUE. IN A 15-MINUTE MONOLOGUE HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT SOUTH AFRICA COULD NOT DELAY ANY LONGER THE MOVE TOWARD NAMIBIAN

INDEPENDENCE; SOUTH AFRICA WANTED OUT OF NAMIBIA, BUT UNDER HONORABLE TERMS; IN MAKING CONCESSIONS, SOUTH AFRICA HAD "LEANED OVER BACKWARDS"; SWAPO, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAD A BAD "TRACK RECORD"; AND, FINALLY, THE NUMBER OF TROOPS PROPOSED BY THE SAG WOULD BE VIRTUALLY UNNOTICED BY THE POPULACE BECAUSE OF THE VASTNESS OF THE TERRITORY.

3. THE UNITED NATIONS WAS REGARDED BY NAMIBIANS AS AN ADVERSARY, MAINLY BECAUSE THE UNGA HAD ACCEPTED SWAPO AS THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NAMIBIAN PEOPLE. A LARGE UN MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE TERRITORY WOULD UNDULY INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF ELECTIONS IN FAVOR OF SWAPO. CONSEQUENTLY SOUTH AFRICA COULD AGREE TO A FIGURE OF 2,000 "MILITARY OBSERVER PERSONNEL" ONLY IF 1,000 WOULD BE PLACED NORTH OF THE NAMIBIA-ANGOLA BORDER AND NO MORE THAN 1,000 IN NAMIBIA ITSELF. OF THE 1,000 IN NAMIBIA, 200 WOULD OPERATE IN THE BORDER AREA FROM RUACANA TO THE MOUTH OF THE CUNENE RIVER (KAOKOVELD), 400 BETWEEN RUACANA AND THE OKAVANGO RIVER (OVAMBOLAND), 200 BETWEEN THE KWANDO RIVER IN THE WEST AND THE ZAMBESI IN THE EAST (EAST CAPRIVI), AND 200 AS "UN MONITORING TEAMS OPERATING WITH SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES ELSEWHERE IN THE NORTH".

4. PRESSED AS TO WHETHER IT WAS A CONDITION THAT THERE HAD TO BE AN EQUAL NUMBER OF UN TROOPS NORTH OF THE BORDER, BOTHA EQUIVOCATED. FIRST HE ANSWERED YES, THEN HE SAID CONFIDENTIAL

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IT MADE NO DIFFERENCE TO SOUTH AFRICA WHETHER THE UN HAD A GREATER OR LESSER NUMBER NORTH OF THE BORDER. FINALLY HE SAID HE WOULD NOT GIVE US AN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION AT THIS TIME.

5. BOTHA SAID THAT THE SAG UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR A REDUCED NUMBER OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS IN THE TERRITORY. IT WAS BECAUSE OF THIS THAT SOUTH AFRICA HAD PREVIOUSLY PROPOSED A REDUCTION TO 1,400 COMBAT TROOPS, WITH AN OVERALL TOTAL OF 4,000 TROOPS. HE WAS NOT SURE HE COULD GET APPROVAL, BUT HE WAS PROPOSING TO VORSTER AND THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE AN ADDITIONAL REDUCTION OF 20 TO 25 PERCENT, I.E., TO ABOUT 3,000 TROOPS IN ALL. 1,400 OF THESE WOULD BE COMBAT TROOPS AND WOULD BE RESTRICTED TO EITHER OSHIVELLO OR GROOTFONTEIN. THREE HUNDRED MEN, AT PLATOON STRENGTH, WOULD BE STATIONED AT EACH OF THE SEVEN BORDER POSTS. THE REMAINDER WOULD SERVE AS LOGISTICAL SUPPORT ELEMENT FOR THE 1,400 COMBAT TROOPS AND THE OTHERS ALONG THE BORDER. SOUTH AFRICA WOULD APPROVE THE ATTACHING OF UN MILITARY OBSERVERS TO EACH OF THE FIXED BASES AND TO THE SUPPORT ELEMENTS AS WELL.

6. FOURIE MADE THE POINT THAT FOR SOUTH AFRICA TO AGREE TO A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, THERE HAD TO BE SUFFICIENT GUARANTEES THAT SWAPO WOULD NOT INFILTRATE FROM THE NORTH. SOUTH AFRICA HAD TO HAVE ASSURANCES FROM "SURROUNDING STATES" THAT THEIR TERRITORY WOULD NOT BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE. IN ADDITION, SWAPO MILITARY FACILITIES WOULD HAVE TO BE CLOSED DOWN AFTER THE NAMIBIA ELECTIONS. FOR ITS PART, SOUTH AFRICA AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO REDUCE ITS FORCES TO THE 3,000-MAN LEVEL FROM EXISTING NUMBERS WITHIN 16 WEEKS. FOURIE STATED THAT THIS PROCESS SHOULD BEGIN ON THE FIRST OF JANUARY. HE ADDED THAT THE 1,500 FIGURE WE HAD PROPOSED WAS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE SAG.

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7. WE THEN GAVE OUR POSITION ON THE TIMING OF THE ELECTIONS. OUR BRIEF TALKING POINTS WERE CONSISTENT WITH THE PRESENTATION WE HAD MADE IN THE FRONTLINE CAPITALS AND WHAT WE HAD TOLD THE SOUTH AFRICANS IN THE PREVIOUS ROUND OF TALKS. BOTHA RESPONDED THAT MONTHS HAD PASSED SINCE OUR FIRST TALKS IN CAPE TOWN. A FURTHER DELAY "WOULD ONLY EXACRBATE THE PROBLEM". THE SAG WOULD NOT

ACCEPT THAT THE DATE SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATOR-GENERAL AND THE UN SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE. THE TIME HAD COME FOR SOUTH AFRICA "TO DIVORCE ITSELF FROM THE TERRITORY". HE DECLARED THAT IF THE FIVE COULD NOT "ACCEPT OUR PROPOSED DATE FOR ELECTIONS, YOU MUST ACT AS YOU SEE FIT ACCORDING TO YOUR INTERESTS". SOUTH AFRICA COULD NOT GO BEYOND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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FIRST WEEK IN JUNE, AND, IN FACT, HAD DECIDED THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY OF JUNE, 1978.

8. IN THE DISCUSSION THAT FOLLOWED, BOTHA TOLD US THAT IF A "CONDITION OF VISIBLE PEACE" COULD BE ACHIEVED QUICKLY, THE 16 WEEKS FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE NUMBER OF SOUTH AFRICAN TROOPS COULD BE SHORTENED, THEREBY GIVING MORE TIME FOR GH ELECTION CAMPAIGN. WE TOLD HIM THAT WE DID NOT BELIEVE THERE WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN WHICH WOULD BE FAIR TO ALL, EVEN IF THE TROOP REDUCTION PROCESS BEGAN JANUARY 1, WHICH WE REGARDED AS MOST DOUBTFUL. THUS THE DATE PROPOSED BY SOUTH AFRICA WOULD PRESENT US WITH SEVERE DIFFICULTIES. ALTHOUGH BOTHA SAID HE WOULD TAKE OUR VIEW INTO ACCOUNT AND CONVEY IT TO HIS GOVERNMENT, HE MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT THE FIRST WEEK IN JUNE WAS FIXED INsofar AS THE SAG WAS CONCERNED. THIS WAS CONFIRMED LATER BY FOURIE DURING A PRIVATE CONVERSATION.

9. WE PROCEEDED TO THE THIRD MAJOR WITHSTANDING ISSUE--THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. AFTER WE HAD STATED OUR POSITION ON THIS QUESTION, AND RELATED WHAT WE HAD BEEN TOLD ABOUT THOSE ALLEGED TO BE HELD IN ZAMBIA, BOTHA RESPONDED THAT HE COULD ADD NOTHING TO WHAT THE SOUTH AFRICANS HAD TOLD US BEFORE. THE SAG CONTINUED TO LINK THE RELEASE OF NAMIBIANS HELD BY SOUTH AFRICAN AUTHORITIES AND THOSE IN DETENTION IN TANZANIA AND ZAMBIA. HE SAID THAT THE SAG COULD NOT ACCEPT THAT DETAINEES IN ZAMBIA HAD BEEN RELEASED. AS FOR THE MACHINERY FOR DETERMINING WHICH NAMIBIANS HELD BY SOUTH AFRICA WERE POLITICAL PRISONERS, HIS GOVERNMENT SAW NO OTHER BASIS FOR THIS THAN THE PANEL OF JURISTS. CONFIDENTIAL

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10. AMBASSADOR MCHENRY CONCLUDED THE MEETING BY

REMINDING THE SOUTH AFRICANS THAT WE HAD COME TO SOUTH AFRICA TO CONSULT WITH THE SAG AND GET ITS VIEWS AS PART OF A PROCESS OF ATTEMPTING TO BRIDGE THE GAP ON THE REMAINING ISSUES. THE BASIC OBJECTIVE REMAINED THE SAME: TO TRY TO GET AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE, PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT TO THE NAMIBIAN PROBLEM. WE WOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO FIND SUCH A SOLUTION.

11. COMMENT: GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN POSITION AND OUR DESIRE SIMPLY TO GET SOUTH AFRICAN VIEWS, WE LIMITED OURSELVES TO QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO GET A FULL UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR REACTIONS TO OUR ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUES AND THEIR OWN PROPOSALS. HOWEVER, THEIR ANSWERS LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT THE GAP BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA'S POSITION AND AN ACCEPTABLE INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENT. WHILE APPEARING TO BE OPEN TO SLIGHT MODIFICATIONS, BOTHA LEFT NO DOUBT THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN ATTITUDE WAS ONE OF TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT.
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